

Descriptions of Health Issues

Many area agencies, hospitals, governmental entities and others care about the health of the community. A group of those organizations has been using a number of ways to find out what the most important health issues are in Waukesha County. At this time, they have identified 8 top issues. A very brief description of each of those issues is below.

For more information, please call the Public Health Division at 262.896.8430 or toll-free at 1.800.540.3620 (TTY/TDD 262.896.8234) or visit www.waukeshacounty.gov/chipp.

Access to Health Care

Access to health care is about community members being able to obtain acceptable, affordable and available health care.

We are concerned about local *access to health care* because of the high number of uninsured, underinsured, and unemployed individuals in the community. Many individuals are not eligible for BadgerCare and can't afford insurance or out-of-pocket health care expenses. Delayed care or untreated illness can also result in people seeking care in emergency rooms, which places a significant unreimbursed expense on local hospitals. This also leads to more individuals with untreated chronic illness, resulting in a less healthy population.

Access to Information

Access to Information is about community members knowing where to go for services.

We are concerned about local *access to information* because while many individuals are aware of 211 as a resource to connect them to services, many others are not aware of 211 or what services or resources are available to them. Access to information leads to more informed decisions, with the ability to use these resources and services to support their families.

Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse

Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) is about abuse of legal and illegal substances that alter a person's mental and/or physical state, and the services that are available to address abuse.

We are concerned about *AODA* because binge drinking in Waukesha County has increased from 16% in 2006 to 27% in 2009, and more than one-fourth of deaths due to motor vehicle crashes involved alcohol. AODA outpatient services have increased 6% over the past 2 years. Additionally, there are a low number of AODA providers in the community and insurance frequently doesn't cover AODA services. Consequences of AODA include family dissolution, unemployment, prison, accidents, suicide and homelessness.

Communicable Diseases

Communicable Diseases are diseases that can be spread from one person to another (or from animals to people) through direct contact, contaminated air particles and/or bodily fluids. Examples include: whooping cough, tuberculosis, flu, measles and others.

We are concerned about *communicable diseases* because with more urbanization, accessibility to world travel, and mobile populations, there is an increased likelihood of outbreaks. Only 58% of Waukesha County 2-year-olds have had all of their recommended vaccinations. Influenza/pneumonia is the 5th leading cause of death in the county. High levels of communicable diseases can result in increased medical costs, a strain on workforce, early death, and other poor health outcomes.

Economics

Economics is about employment, living wage jobs, unsecured debt, and the cost of living.

We are concerned about *economics* because Waukesha County economic support cases have doubled in the last 10 years and adult unemployment increased to 7.5% in 2009 (versus 4% in 2008). Credit card debt is high, yet there seems to be a limited focus on financial education. There is limited low income housing in the area. Job loss can result in home loss, health care insurance loss, increased stress, and decreased access to food, resulting in poor health outcomes.

Mental Health:

Mental Health is about feeling strong and healthy in your mind and spirit.

We are concerned about *mental health* because worsening economic conditions can decrease mental health. There is a decline of specialized non-profits (e.g., those that serve clients with AODA and mental health). A lack of permanent housing is a major predictor of poor mental health. There is a significant relationship between poor mental health and stress, AODA, unemployment and homelessness.

Obesity

Obesity is about a healthy weight-height balance.

We are concerned about *obesity* because 63% of adults in Waukesha County are obese, and only 30% have the recommended vegetable intake, 68% have the recommended fruit intake, and 53% have the recommended level of exercise. Obesity is a significant contributor to chronic diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Obesity can result in increased medical costs, a strain on the workforce, and poor health outcomes in general, including disability.

Strong and Stable Families

Strong and Stable Families is about parental involvement, divorce, and values.

We are concerned about *strong and stable families* because families are an essential part of the community structure. Sixty percent of children are in blended families; the divorce rate is high and the long-term impact of divorce on children can be significant. Single parents frequently have lower income, which can affect children's academic performance and nutrition. High parental involvement and good boundaries with children can have a positive impact.